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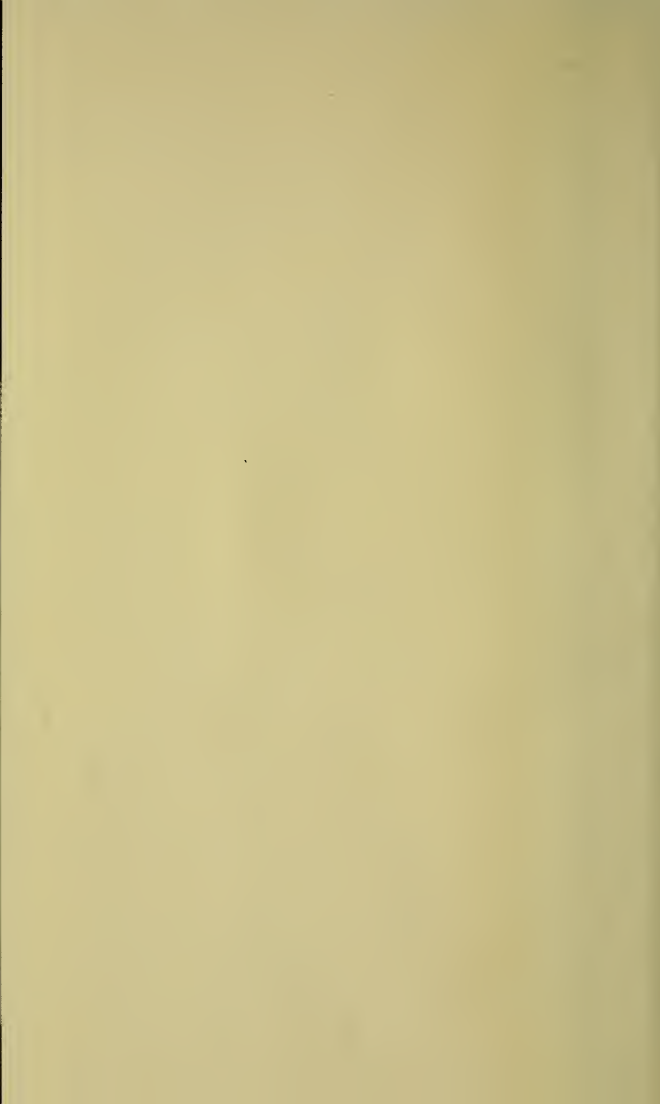


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A MODERN PHENIX



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By

GERVÉ BARONTI



THE CORNHILL COMPANY
BOSTON

PR6003
A75M6
1917

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To

PAUL RUTLEDGE DANNER



CAST OF CHARACTERS

In the order in which they appear

MARY MILLER

LOTTIE THOMPSON

PETER GRAHAM

MRS. MILLER (Mary's Grandmother)

LIZZIE GRAHAM (Peter's Mother)

MINERVA THOMPSON (Lottie's Mother)

PHYLLIS LEIGHTON

CHUBBY

DR. VON BLATZ

MR. LEIGHTON

MRS. LEIGHTON

RUSSELL LEIGHTON



FIRST ACT

SCENE I

THE shore of a lake, farm-house at a short distance away—Mary Miller (a child of fourteen) is driving stakes in the sand. She is building a hut which she intends to cover with pine boughs. Pine boughs are thrown around the stage in the vicinity of Mary. Off to the right, staring dreamily into vacancy, is Lottie Thompson.



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FIRST ACT

SCENE I

MARY

Lottie, come and help me drive these stakes in the sand. I want to finish the house before Peter returns.

LOTTIE

(*Without moving.*) I wish you would let me alone, Mary, when I am travelling: I was just leaving the Palace to ride out with the Prince in such a wonderful carriage; and oh, such a wonderful Prince, tall and handsome, with plumes in his hat and great silver buckles on his shoes. Oh Mary, how could you?

MARY

My grandmother says that you should not dream this way in the daytime, with your eyes open. Yesterday I heard her telling Peter's mother that she would be glad when your mother came home, because she is afraid that you might do something.

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LOTTIE

Do something?

MARY

Yes, something terrible.

LOTTIE

I won't do anything terrible, Mary. I never dream anything terrible—my dreams are all nice ones. Beautiful ladies, and beautiful gardens, big blue oceans with ships sailing away trimmed with golden sails, and people on board playing lovely music. Everything should be pretty, Mary—and everybody should have a pretty face. I love the people who have pretty faces.

MARY

How do you dream things, Lottie? I watched you the other day and I tried to dream, too. I sat where you are now, and looked out over the sea the way you do and up into that tall pine tree and just waited,—but no dream would come.

LOTTIE

Oh, I don't have to sit here and look at the sea or the pine tree. Why the dreams come any place. Sometimes when people are talking to me a dream comes along and I can't hear what they are saying.

FIRST ACT

MARY

I wish I could have a nice dream just to see how it feels, and—

[Enter Peter.]

PETER

Hello, girls,—say, Lottie, Mary's grandmother just had a letter from your mother, and she is coming home tonight.

LOTTIE

Oh, is she?

MARY

Won't you help me, Peter. I can't make this house all alone. I have gathered lots of pine boughs to put on the top for a roof, and grandmother said that we could have the sail from Uncle Dick's old boat to put around the sides.

PETER

Let's all work and we will have it made in no time.

MARY

Lottie is dreaming of a Prince with silver shoe-buckles, and—well—she just can't help—

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PETER

(Looking wistfully across to where Lottie is sitting.) Gee, I wish I was a Prince!

MARY

What are you saying, Peter?

PETER

(Ignoring.) Wait a minute, Mary, that stake isn't straight in the sand, let me do it—there now—that's better.

MARY

Won't it be a dandy house? I'll be the mother, Peter, and you'll be the father—and Lottie can be—let's see—

PETER

Oh, Lottie can be the grand lady who comes to visit us—and she must always be sad because the Prince had to stay at home and could not come with her.

MRS. MILLER

(Calling from the house.) Come, children—supper will be early tonight. Grandfather must go to the station to meet Lottie's mother. Come, come quickly; bring Peter with you.

[Children leave stage.]

FIRST ACT

SCENE II

A SITTING room in a farm-house. Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Graham are knitting. In a room to the left the children can be heard at supper.

MRS. MILLER

Well, Lizzie, *she* is coming back this evening. And I am not sorry. That child Lottie worries me dreadfully. So like him I think—dreaming all the time and never doing anything. There was bad blood there, Lizzie. You remember that scrape at the mining camp before he came over here. Some say that he was drunk at the time.

MRS. GRAHAM

Of course he was drunk. How else could such a sleepy nature be roused to commit a crime?

MRS. MILLER

Don't be too sure of the "sleepy natures," Lizzie. The worst people I have known have been the sleepy ones—their ideas just smoulder and smoulder way down under their words, until at

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last they get to such a seething state inside they just blaze out and scorch everything in reach.

MRS. GRAHAM

Well, I always say, give me a quick tempered person to get along with. They spit out whatever comes to their mind, and it's out of their system for good.

MRS. MILLER

Yes, these deep ones—you never know when they're going to break out, nor which way they're headed.

MRS. GRAHAM

(*Looking out of window, attracted by noise.*) Oh, here they come. Just look at her hat. Did you ever see such a big feather?

[*Enter Mrs. Thompson.—A woman not very tall, and rather inclined to fleshiness. There is a sort of too muchness about her. Too much perfume, too much style,—no repose. She is very quick and is constantly in motion. One could not think consecutively while she is in the room.*]

MRS. THOMPSON

Good evening, Mrs. Graham. Good evening, Mrs. Miller. Well, I'm glad that journey is over.

FIRST ACT

So hot, and why must the seats in trains be covered with plush in summer? There should be a law—My, but I'm dirty—where are the children?
(*This all in one breath.*)

MRS. MILLER

They're eating supper, I'll call them.

MRS. THOMPSON

No, let them alone, I want to get my breath.

MRS. GRAHAM

Warm in town, I suppose?

MRS. THOMPSON

Warm! Hot! Awful! (*Abstractedly.*) Lottie been good?

MRS. MILLER

(*Slowly.*) M-m-yes—(*Mrs. Thompson turns and looks at her.*) Why, yes, Lottie has been good. She's never what you can call naughty,—not as the other children are naughty. I sometimes wish she would be, one could manage her better. She is unmanageable.

MRS. THOMPSON

Lottie always was a strange little thing, even as a baby; but I've always been glad she wasn't one

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of those noisy children who keep one busy looking after them. I can't stand noisy children—they make me nervous. Why, what has she been doing since I've been away?

MRS. MILLER

That's just it, Minerva, you have been perfectly contented to let the child do as she pleases so long as she keeps quiet and doesn't bother you. A child should be taught obedience, respect, and attention. Lottie just simply acts as if she doesn't hear what is being said to her. Oh, well, Minerva, you never had any knack with children anyway.

[The children enter from the other room. Lottie rushes to her mother, who kisses her in an abstracted way.]

LOTTIE

Oh, mother, what a lovely feather—so like the one the Prince wears—

MRS. THOMPSON

What nonsense is this, my child? What are you saying about a Prince?

MRS. MILLER

There it is, Minerva—that's just what I mean—dreams and foolishness all the time.

FIRST ACT

PETER

(*Going over and standing by Lottie.*) Don't you care, Lottie. I just love to hear about your Prince. Come on down to the little hut we made tomorrow and tell me more about him.

MRS. THOMPSON

I shall need Lottie tomorrow, Peter. I brought home some cloth, Lottie, to make two or three dresses for you.

LOTTIE

Oh, thank you, mother—is it some pretty color?

MRS. THOMPSON

It is serviceable, my child, and will wear nicely.

LOTTIE

But, mother, you don't wear clothes that are serviceable and wear nicely. You buy pretty things for yourself—and sometimes they don't last at all.

MRS. GRAHAM

Minerva, don't you think Lottie's dresses should be a little longer now? Let me see—(*slowly*)—she was fourteen last spring. Well, I told Daddy the other night that I was glad I had no girls to bring up.

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MRS. MILLER

I'd just as soon bring up girls as the boys that you see today. Why most of 'em act just like girls. They sit around and read books—poetry books, often—and drink tea in the afternoon—and try to find what they call a congenial vocation. I tell you—the boys were different when I was a girl.

PETER

Everything was different when you were a girl, Mrs. Graham—but just the same, the boys of today are not sissys. I just love to read poetry—or to hear about Lottie's Prince, and everything like that—but if a chap makes me mad—it doesn't take me long to punch his face. Sometimes it gives me a thrill to do it.

MARY

What is a thrill, Peter?

PETER

A thrill is—oh, a thrill is—something that makes you very happy—you feel all tingly. Don't you remember that little electric battery that Uncle Dick had—when you took hold of the handles you felt so funny—well, a thrill is something like that, only nicer.

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MARY

I never had a thrill.

LOTTIE

Of course not.

MRS. MILLER

(*Starting to leave the room.*) Minerva, come out to the dining room and have some supper. You must be starved. It is long past supper time.

MRS. THOMPSON

The weather is so hot—I think the less one eats the better.

MRS. GRAHAM

Well, I am going along. I promised Daddy that I would read the paper to him tonight. He doesn't care for Peter's reading. Peter only selects the things that he likes to read himself.

[*They go out, leaving the children alone in the room.*]

PETER

Say, did you hear my mother say that I only read the things that I liked in the newspapers? Well, I don't like the newspapers anyway. I like books and magazines—my father just goes to

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sleep when you read the paper to him—but he imagines that he must hear it every day. Says it is his duty to know what is going on in the world. I don't believe the papers really tell you what is going on in the world.

LOTTIE

When I grow up I am never going to do anything that is my duty. All the nice things are naughty. But I am just going to do the things I like. And I shall love all the pretty things, even if they are naughty.

MARY

Oh, Lottie, you know what Miss Blake told us one Sunday—that if we didn't do our duty some terrible thing would happen to us.

LOTTIE

Oh, yes, I know, but I think duty is the terrible thing—as Miss Blake and Peter's mother and your grandmother talk it. I just wish some kind person would come along and tell us just how duty can be made nice and pleasant.

PETER

Say, Lottie, I bet all this old dry stuff is not your duty but something pleasant is. I've been

FIRST ACT

thinking a whole lot lately—and it seems to me that the things you love to do must be right.

MARY

That is just what grandmother says is a dangerous way to think.

PETER

Well, suppose it is a dangerous way to think. A chap has to think some way. If I ask mother or dad anything, they say—"Peter, that will keep till you get older"—but they don't know all these things going round in my head that just won't wait.

LOTTIE

Mother says that adolescence—that is her name for my age at present—is a very happy time. I don't believe it. I think it is the saddest time—nobody understands you or cares for what you think.

MARY

Lottie, you and Peter say such strange things. I never have such thoughts.

LOTTIE

No, Mary, you are normal.

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MARY

What do you mean?

LOTTIE

I don't know exactly—but I think it means commonplace—like everybody else. A person who enjoys doing his duty.

PETER

Gee, then I'm not normal.

MRS. THOMPSON

(*Entering the room.*) What are you saying, Peter?

PETER

I was just refusing to be normal, Mrs. Thompson.

MRS. THOMPSON

You run home now, Peter—it is almost your bedtime. Tell your mother that I am coming over to see her soon. (*Peter leaves stage.*) Children, what were you talking with Peter about just before I entered?

LOTTIE

Oh, mother, I said that it was normal to like to

FIRST ACT

do your duty—and Peter said that he was not normal.

MRS. THOMPSON

Where do you get such ideas, my child? I am worried about you. Mrs. Miller thinks that it might be well for you to go away to boarding school. (*Slowly.*) I wonder—I wonder—

LOTTIE

Mother, I should just love to go away to school, —all but leaving Peter.

MRS. THOMPSON

Perhaps it is best to leave Peter for the present. I wish you to associate with girls, child. Later when you learn that nice people are always normal and dutiful—it will be time enough for you to associate with the boys.

LOTTIE

I hate to think of growing up to be a nice person.

MRS. THOMPSON

Lottie, what do you mean?

LOTTIE

I don't know if I can explain very well, mother;

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but I am thinking of all the nice persons I know. They don't seem happy. I don't see how they can be happy, they are so busy doing their duty and making others do their duty. I hate the word duty—it stifles me and makes me want to scream.

[Mrs. Miller has entered in the midst of this speech, and now comes forward, much shocked.]

MRS. MILLER

Lottie, you are a wicked, sinful little girl. Can't you see how you worry your poor mother with such ideas?

LOTTIE

That's what I mean, mother. You and Mrs. Miller are doing your duty by me and making me unhappy. If I want to put a bright ribbon on my hair, because it is a pretty color and makes me happy, I'm lectured on the sin of vanity. If I want to go out at night and lie down and smell the grass and watch the stars, I'm told that the night air isn't good for me. Last night there was a beautiful sunset with a wonderful sun god riding across the sky in a golden cloud-chariot,—but I was called in to wipe the dishes. (*Getting more excited.*) Mother, I want to know all about the world (*goes to the window*). I want to know what is beyond those hills over there—I don't want to

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be told. I want to *see*. You nice people don't seem to know, and you don't care (*hysterically*). You are always telling me that I am sinful. Then I'd rather be sinful than like you (*wildly*). I want to be sinful. I want to be happy. I want to be happy! (*Breaks down and sobs wildly.*)

MRS. THOMPSON

The child is out of her mind (*snivelling*). Oh, why must such crosses come to me? First her father—and now she is—Oh, Mrs. Miller, what am I to do?

MRS. MILLER

She should be sent off to school at once. She must have the most rigid discipline.

MRS. THOMPSON

(*Still snivelling.*) Lottie—I—

MRS. MILLER

Now let me deal with her, Minerva. I've brought her out of these tantrums before. (*Takes lamp from the table and stands before Lottie like a relentless angel of vengeance.*) Lottie, your mother and I are going to leave you alone here in the dark to think over your naughtiness. When you are sorry you may come and apologize to your mother.

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If I were you I should pray for a clean heart. Come, Minerva. (*Going toward door.*) Now as to schools, I believe I know the very place. It is said to be most high in moral tone and atmosphere, and most strict in discipline. (*They leave stage still talking.*)

[*The room is dark except for the moonlight, streaming in through the window and falling on the sobbing form of Lottie. After a moment her sobs cease suddenly and she raises her head, her face illumined with a sudden hope.*]

LOTTIE

School—(*She goes to the window and looks out*)—school—that is beyond the hills. (*She draws herself up as if to face an ordeal and starts for the door as the curtain descends.*)

SECOND ACT

(Three Years Elapse)

LEAVING BOARDING SCHOOL

PHYLLIS' room at Boarding School, handsomely furnished—mahogany dresser,—cheval glass—bed with white hanging counterpane, littered with clothing—in one corner of room a gate-legged table on which an opened box of candy is seen—a few well-chosen pictures on walls—small rugs—a trunk is open in center of room—closet door open, showing clothing—Phyllis is packing trunk—takes clothes off bed and out of closet, folds them, and drops them into trunk. While thus occupied, Lottie comes in.

Phyllis is a girl from the modern radical household, using many phrases that she has heard at home, parrot-fashion.



SECOND ACT

[*Lottie knocks at Phyllis' door, and walks right in.*]

LOTTIE

Well, dear, you seem to have a great deal to pack yet. I finished long ago—but then I had nothing much to pack—(*wistfully*). Can't I help you?

PHYLLIS

(*Passes her candy.*) Oh, no, you sit down and have some candy. I can throw these togs into my trunk in a jiffy.

LOTTIE

(*Selects most comfortable chair and eats candy.*) It is perfectly lovely of you, Phil, to take me home with you. I dreaded having to go back to that country village. Of course there is Peter (*sadly*).

PHYLLIS

How is Peter, Lottie; what is the latest from him?

LOTTIE

I had a letter this morning. He is such a brave chap. You see, since his father died, he has had

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to do everything. He could not leave his mother to go away to school. So he has been studying all the literature he could get on agriculture and scientific farming, and with the help of one old farm hand he carries on the place.

PHYLLIS

So that is your idea of a brave chap? One whose development proceeds on tradition? Because his father was a farmer, and left him a farm, you believe he also must be a farmer?

LOTTIE

So far as Peter is concerned, I don't see how he could do anything else.

PHYLLIS

Why not, indeed? Surely a fellow can leave home, and plan his life to suit himself?

LOTTIE

Yes, Phil, but there is his mother.

PHYLLIS

This sentimental nonsense about fathers and mothers makes me rather tired. (*Slams down trunk lid.*)

SECOND ACT

LOTTIE

Don't you believe in responsibility?

PHYLLIS

That depends on what you consider responsibility—if by responsibility you mean that a man should submerge his ideals and the working out of his own life beneath the wish of another—then I don't believe in responsibility.

LOTTIE

But, it is not the wish of his mother—Peter considers it his duty.

PHYLLIS

(Enter Chubby while Phyllis is talking. Chubby goes over and sits on trunk.) Duty is a phantom shackle which holds us to the gray rock of responsibility.

Chubby

Oh, Phil, what have you been reading lately—where did you get that?

PHYLLIS

You wouldn't understand if I told you.

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CHUBBY

Gracious, was it as bad as that? Well, I suppose you have both received the lectures on your future. Mother Merton just waylaid me when I was coming in from the garden and passed me mine.

LOTTIE

(*Stretching her arms out.*) My future will not be planned on Miss Merton's copy book maxims. I intend to live.

PHYLLIS

You speak, Lottie, as if you had some definite plan. Tell us about it.

LOTTIE

(*Draws along breath.*) No, I don't believe I have yet. I've been trying to form one for a long time out of all I have read, and all I have longed for. And I have *only* what I have read, and *only* what I have longed for (*pathetically*). I've never been told—anything.

CHUBBY

Think of the voyage of discovery that is coming to you!

LOTTIE

Without chart or compass—is that fair? That is just the point I've been puzzled over. It doesn't

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seem fair, I just can't make it fair. They tell us our elders are wiser than we, and that they know what is best. If they are right, then I am wrong—I'm all wrong and wicked,—but if I am right—

CHUBBY

How can you know if you are right or not? You say that no one has ever told you anything. How do you know the things to think about?

LOTTIE

There are things I think about in my own way—but I want to *know*. I want to know the things they do not tell you about in schools, the things that parents will not explain to you. Of course I have my own ideas.

PHYLLIS

(*Moving things around on bureau.*) What are your own ideas?

LOTTIE

I think I should do as I please with myself—with my own life, with my own body,—with everything.

PHYLLIS

(*Parrot-like.*) Yes, but you are not all body. Perhaps you have forgotten that you have a soul.

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LOTTIE

No, I haven't—my soul struggles inside always, it tortures me, it cries out for beauty—it seems at times as if all my body drops away and my soul stands out alone, exposed. But my soul wants my body to be beautiful—I know it.

CHUBBY

(*Giving Lottie a careful look.*) Your body is beautiful—I was thinking that the other day at the gym.

LOTTIE

Oh, girls, you do not understand me—I love my body because through it I enjoy life and beauty. I want to love. I want to love some one—beautifully. My mother would never listen when I tried to tell her my dreams. She would weep and say that I worried her as my father had before me. She would ask the advice of some one else—and some one else would always decide for her. When I tried to ask her the intimate things that a girl should know—she looked shocked and said she would tell me later—but she never did.

PHYLLIS

I read what I pleased for myself. I never bothered to ask my parents. I found some medical

SECOND ACT

books one day and I devoured them. Of course my parents talk things over freely and take it for granted that we—Russell and I—are getting it. (*Again the parrot.*) With a robust intelligence, of course, one can listen to anything.

CHUBBY

My salaams to the robust intelligence—(*makes a low bow*).

LOTTIE

I do not wish to interfere with others in order to live my own life—but I have no tools to work with—

PHYLLIS

You would not wield the heavy tools that dig around deep roots and massive trunks,—you care only for the leaves and flowers—

LOTTIE

I love leaves and flowers and color and fragrance, and I am inclined to forget that the roots must fasten themselves in the black earth in order to produce the leaves and flowers. Yes, Phil, I am running all to leaves without root or trunk. Our parents and elders should help us with the roots, they should tell us everything so we would know which way to grow. They are constantly telling us to respect them—but they do not respect us.

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PHYLLIS

Parents believe that the exaction of obedience is their only duty to their children. Respect would weaken their ruling power.

CHUBBY

(Standing upon trunk and declaiming in a loud voice with much gesture.) On your right, ladies and gentlemen, you see the famous Phyllis Jabber Wockus, eats a dictionary at every meal, and washes it down with a Fabian Tract! Perfectly harmless, ladies and gentlemen, those wild, incoherent cries are caused by an attack of acute Shavian indigestion from which the very young of the species suffer greatly of late.

LOTTIE

Do get down, Chubby, and tell us what Miss Merton advises for your future? Does she know of your stage aspirations?

CHUBBY

(Gets down.) No, indeed, as Phil would say—"she would not understand." Mother has decided that I am to go to college and has talked it over with Miss Merton,—so why should I interrupt the plan of the dear ladies until I have

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selected the dramatic school where I mean to attend?

PHYLLIS

I suppose you have heard of the best laid plans of mice and men?

CHUBBY

Yes, Bromidia, darling.

LOTTIE

I should hate the stage—while I was actually out before the footlights playing my part I might be able to tolerate it—but the ugly dressing rooms, the coarse people one frequently must play with, the inartistic rush—oh, horrors!—

PHYLLIS

One can be too greatly interested in beauty. We should look below the tinted surface and study the features.

CHUBBY

I often wonder if you stay up nights committing phrases—or if they keep you in a cage when you are at home and feed you crackers.

LOTTIE

The bird is pretty enough to keep in a cage.

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(Looking affectionately at Phyllis.) I love that dress you are wearing today, Phil.

PHYLLIS

Do you think that you would care less for me if I wore old shabby clothes?

LOTTIE

I should try not to care less for you, dear, but it might be a struggle. I love pretty clothes, and people who are graceful enough to wear them nicely.

CHUBBY

I am going to skip and write two or three letters before leaving—I suppose you girls are going on that five o'clock? See you later down stairs.
(Chubby leaves stage.)

LOTTIE

(Putting her arm around Phyllis.) Oh, Phil, sometimes our dreams come true—sometimes we get what we wish for. I have always wanted to live in a large handsome house where a number of servants are kept. Where there is a lovely garden and one may sit out under the trees and drink tea in the afternoon. You are such a dear to rescue me from that little country place where farming is the only thought.

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PHYLLIS

Have you forgotten that Peter is a brave chap because he carries on his father's farm?

LOTTIE

I never forget Peter,—not really. If Peter could only go away and live as he wishes! He loves the beautiful things just as I do—but he has strength enough to resist them—and think of his duty.

PHYLLIS

Duty again!—It is not duty to live a dull and uninteresting life mapped out by others—it is lack of courage.

LOTTIE

(*Thoughtfully.*) Perhaps it is the highest courage to live your life for others.

PHYLLIS

No, you owe it to yourself to find your work—and then pursue it without allowing anyone to interrupt you.

LOTTIE

It is very hard to find your work. Some of us never find our work. I would not know my work if I met it face to face.

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PHYLLIS

(*Starting to pack again.*) Haven't you some idea about what you would like to do?

LOTTIE

I only know that I wish to do something that will be beautiful. I would like to paint beautiful pictures, to play wonderful music—wonderfully. I always want to bow to a beautiful flower—to stretch my arms up to the golden sunset—when the trees paint their reflection on a quiet lake in the evening—and the little stars peek over the edge of some fleecy cloud. I am stunned by the beauty of it all—it makes me feel weak. I want to cry—I want—oh, I don't know what I want—

PHYLLIS

You must think of something besides externals—you must—

LOTTIE

I try to—I try to care for what Mrs. Miller, an old lady at home, used to call homely virtues. Sometimes I have long talks with myself—and would you believe it, dear, it is usually at dawn, I wake up and I think how small and silly I am, how different from others—different from you and Chubby and all the other girls here. If I have

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done something wrong during the previous day I scold myself for it—and really I feel very sorry and mean to do better.

PHYLLIS

Poor Lottie, how long do your resolutions of the dawn last?

LOTTIE

That's just it—when I get up and go down stairs and see one of the girls with her hair all awry and her dress not carefully put on, I forget all her good qualities that I promised myself I should see—and I become that silly person again.

PHYLLIS

But do you feel genuinely sorry for your shortcomings when you wake at dawn—to have it out with yourself?

LOTTIE

Oh, yes, and sorry for anything I have done to hurt another person. Do you consider this a hopeful sign?

PHYLLIS

I cannot tell, dear, perhaps you are disappointed because you have offended your artistic sense. You always wish to do the pretty, graceful thing.

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LOTTIE

Yes, Phil, but that is not all. With you it has been so different. You have always been surrounded by beautiful things—you have never had to *long* for them. I have seen them only in dreams—and no one would understand my dreams.

PHYLLIS

Your dreams may not be understood but you will find persons some day who will listen to them—men, of course.

LOTTIE

My mother would never listen to anything—in fact, she never had time for me—she always wanted some one else to take care of me. She used to say that children made her nervous. Would you believe it, she has only written to me twice since I have been here at school.

PHYLLIS

Never mind, dear, your mother cannot live your life for you, anyway. We must live our own lives. My mother has her ideas—and I have mine—we get on very nicely.

LOTTIE

Tell me something about your brother? Is he as handsome as his picture?

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PHYLLIS

He is considered very good looking. He has been out of college three years. He wears his clothes well, has his nails manicured regularly—and he will listen to your dreams. Gracious, dear! (*Looks at watch, startled.*) It is nearly five—and all those long goodbyes yet—run and grab your things and we will skip downstairs. (*Lottie leaves stage.*)

[Phyllis goes over and locks her trunk. She raises her head slowly and stands a moment thinking.]

PHYLLIS

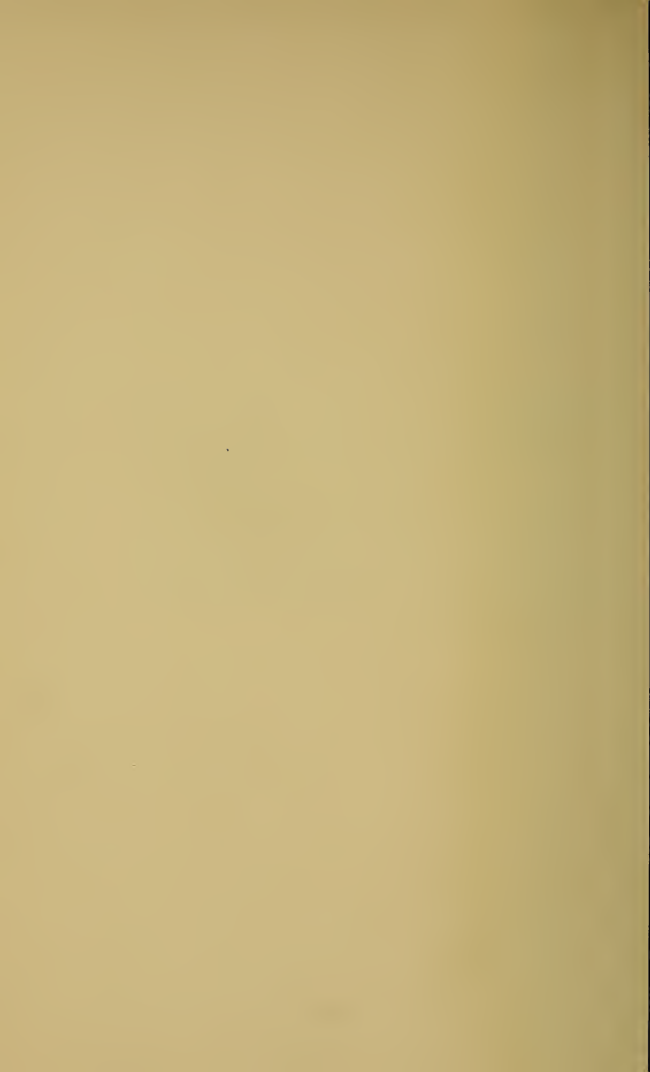
Yes, she is right—she is all leaves and foliage—yet—

[CURTAIN]



THIRD ACT

THE garden at the home of Mr. Leighton. At left a tea table, with service, is placed under a tree, two chairs are placed at table. Lottie Thompson occupies one. At right is a garden seat, occupied by Dr. Von Blatz. Near front of stage, quite in the foreground, Phyllis Leighton is sitting with an open book in her hand. The house is at back of stage, with flight of steps, leading to opened door. The idea of late summer everywhere.



THIRD ACT

DR. VON BLATZ

And so you see, my dear Miss Thompson, by this method we can readily determine the capacities as well as the incapacities of each individual case. The deficient cells of the brain we let alone as there is nothing there with which to assimilate suggestions: but on the other hand, the cells that are capable of grasping and retaining impressions are developed to the utmost, for most defectives are capable of development in some special line.

LOTTIE

It is indeed interesting, but is it not necessary to begin with your patients at a very early age?

DR. VON BLATZ

No age is hopeless. There is usually hope in some direction. It is a question of changing the brain habits. If one has tried to use the cells that are short,—we speak of cells being long and short for convenience,—we but change the current and direct it into the long cells. It is frequently found that a person who has tried vainly for years to develop in a certain direction, may succeed along

A MODERN PHENIX

a very different line to the great surprise of himself and his friends. I am speaking now of the normal person who has been using his short cells.

LOTTIE

You do not hold to the theory, then, that the very early impressions of the child will color his entire life?

DR. VON BLATZ

The early impressions are very important, Miss Thompson, but we are continually reborn. Our minds should be cleared every once in a while of old ideas when they have served their purpose. It is not the gift of remembrance, but the trick of forgetting, which we need to cultivate.

PHYLLIS

(*Looking up from her book.*) Oh, but there are things we must remember—things we should never forget.

DR. VON BLATZ

Yes, but we should choose carefully the things to be remembered. When we are normal, remembering and forgetting is a question of our will.

[*Enter Mr. and Mrs. Leighton, and Russell.*]

THIRD ACT

MRS. LEIGHTON

(*Sits beside Dr. Von Blatz on divan.*) Well, this looks cool and comfortable. (*Shakes hands with doctor.*) How do you do, Dr. Von Blatz. How is the new hospital coming on?

DR. VON BLATZ

Splendidly. I have just been telling Miss Thompson and Phyllis something of our work.

MR. LEIGHTON

(*Standing at left of stage.*) Are we then too late? I have been anxious to hear your theories on re-birth.

RUSSELL

(*Sits down opposite Lottie at tea table.*) Oh, yes, do tell us how a chap gets a second whack at the game.

DR. VON BLATZ

Well, Russell, a chap can get a second, or third, or any number of whacks at the game, if he knows how to play it.

PHYLLIS

It's different from bridge, Russell—the idea is to forget—not to remember.

A MODERN PHENIX

MRS. LEIGHTON

How is it possible to forget deliberately?

DR. VON BLATZ

We throw into the rubbish heap today the faded flowers that were so brilliant and beautiful yesterday—or if we keep them we press them in a book—put it away on some old shelf and—forget it.

MRS. LEIGHTON

Yes, but some day we may take the book from the old shelf, and find the faded flower, and it may recall some pleasant moment.

DR. VON BLATZ

Perhaps, and if it recalls a pleasant moment we may feel repaid—but if we had taken the flower from the grave of a loved one, who had erred unfortunately—it might recall the unfortunate circumstance.

MR. LEIGHTON

So you believe that we should only remember the pleasant places in our lives and forget the shadows?

DR. VON BLATZ

No, I do not mean that,—that would be deliberately carrying along the faded flowers after

THIRD ACT

their usefulness is gone. Whatever is good must go on anyway. The fragrance of the flower has been cast upon the air—the rest crumbles into dust—we need make no effort to recall the appearance of the dust.

LOTTIE

Don't you think that we must atone for the wrong we do?

DR. VON BLATZ

We always do, my dear young lady—but we can will how our atonement is to be managed. It is for us to decide whether we will grovel beside the ruin of our error or build something new and beautiful in its place.

MR. LEIGHTON

I can understand how one may forget a petty error—but suppose one were to commit a crime, a terrible crime of the haunting sort—one that dogged your footsteps always?

DR. VON BLATZ

The element of greatness is the same in its essence—the brain that can conceive a great crime can conceive as great a good. It is using its long cells—it but needs the force of will that en-

A MODERN PHENIX

gineered the great crime to change the current in the cells. The great sinner makes the great saint.

RUSSELL

Would it not be a dangerous philosophy to teach the young? According to that a man could do most anything and get away with it.

DR. VON BLATZ

People do not sin deliberately for the sake of forgetting later. Rebirth is to lead them out of the labyrinth of despair.

PHYLLIS

There seems to be no place for prisons in your philosophy?

DR. VON BLATZ

There is no place for prisons—neither in my philosophy nor any other man's. Prisons rise up and cry "no" to all philosophy. They bar a man from his atonement.

MRS. LEIGHTON

But is it not necessary to have prisons to restrain those who would injure others?

THIRD ACT

DR. VON BLATZ

Yes, if we restrain those who would injure others. Those who by verbal tricks and bribery gamble with human life.

MRS. LEIGHTON

What would you do with all the vice that is running rampant around us—all the vicious tendencies?

DR. VON BLATZ

I should look behind the vice and the viciousness and see what is causing it. I think the real criminals are the unprepared parents.

MRS. LEIGHTON

The unprepared parents—

DR. VON BLATZ

Yes, Mrs. Leighton, people who have children without giving thought to the consequences. Parents should prepare for children spiritually, morally, physically. Think what it means to bring a human being into the world. It is the most important thing in life. It should be raised to a sanctification. My work would not be necessary if parents were prepared. Not necessary in

A MODERN PHENIX

individual cases. At present, we can only work with the material at hand and reconstruct it as best we can.

RUSSELL

(*Getting up and looking at his watch.*) Lottie, if we intend to see that tennis match at the club, we had better go along.

MRS. LEIGHTON

Phil and I will ride over with you as far as Townleys. Come, Phil dear. (*Shakes hands with doctor.*) Won't you join us later at dinner?

[*Phil and Russell stand waiting near exit.*]

DR. VON BLATZ

No, thank you, I must get back to the hospital.

LOTTIE

(*Goes over to doctor.*) You have given me so many new ideas. I feel almost bewildered. It is like stepping out into the light—suddenly.

[*Lottie and Mrs. Leighton join Phil and Russell. They leave stage.*]

[*Mr. Leighton and Dr. Von Blatz seat themselves. Mr. Leighton passes the doctor a cigar.*]

THIRD ACT

MR. LEIGHTON

Well, doctor, so the dream is realized at last, and your hospital actually open. It has been a long fight, hasn't it?

DR. VON BLATZ

It has been all of that. How people have clung to their faded flowers. Even the scientific world clings now and then to its little crumbled gods and dusty symbols of past experience.

MR. LEIGHTON

I have been reading your latest book, and although you use only mental defectives for your working material, it strikes me that certain theories you present would work as well or better if applied to normal life.

DR. VON BLATZ

Yes, the life of Miss Thompson, for instance. There is material that interests me.

MR. LEIGHTON

What a strange, romantic little thing she is!

DR. VON BLATZ

Romantic, yes, a soul attuned to beauty like a

A MODERN PHENIX

delicate instrument whose notes will sing or sob according to the hand that strikes the cords.

MR. LEIGHTON

She loves beauty—but not in its large sense.

DR. VON BLATZ

That is due to lack of training. Poor child, she cannot penetrate beneath the surface yet.

MR. LEIGHTON

Do you think she will ever penetrate beneath the surface?

DR. VON BLATZ

Yes, if the shock is great enough. She is the sort that must be startled violently—then that love of beauty will be diverted into the right channels, and she will see the vigorous beauty in the things that now she is afraid to contemplate.

MR. LEIGHTON

Your theory is very interesting for individuals, but could it be applied in a broader way—for example, how would it work if applied to groups, or to nations?

DR. VON BLATZ

Certainly, nations should be reborn, and in their birth struggles they should be assisted by

THIRD ACT

other nations. The great collective thought force of a nation may have erred in judgment as an individual may err.

MR. LEIGHTON

But if a nation has used its collective thought force to destroy all other nations, should not such an element of destruction be in turn annihilated?

DR. VON BLATZ

By no means, if the thought force was powerful enough to conceive such colossal destruction—that same power should be diverted into other channels—and *made* to reconstruct what it has destroyed.

MR. LEIGHTON

There are things that are destroyed irrevocably—things that cannot be reconstructed.

DR. VON BLATZ

There are old laws and beliefs that pass after their usefulness is gone, but on their ruins something finer may be erected.

MR. LEIGHTON

Your ideas are certainly hopeful—and the world needs something hopeful.

A MODERN PHENIX

DR. VON BLATZ

You must come down to the hospital some day and let me explain to you just how we work. We build up the body first; but our chief work is with a sick mind and a sick soul. (*Takes up his hat, and prepares to leave.*)

MR. LEIGHTON

I shall anticipate the visit with a great deal of pleasure.

[While they are talking they walk toward the steps leading to the house. Mr. Leighton mounts a step or two, then turns and carelessly places his hand on the doctor's shoulder.]

Good luck to your new work, old man, let us hear from it often.

[Mr. Leighton enters house. Doctor leaves stage.]

[Enter Lottie and Russell, who walk over and sit together on garden seat.]

LOTTIE

No, please don't talk like that, you—you frighten me.

RUSSELL

Why? What is there to be frightened about?

THIRD ACT

I thought you intended to do the things that pleased you? Now, where is your courage?

LOTTIE

It requires more than courage—it requires the sacrifice of one's friends.

RUSSELL

In the days of our grandmothers, perhaps, but the world looks upon things differently today. We do not lose our friends today—our real friends—just because we live as we choose.

LOTTIE

I agree with you, one should live one's own life—but it's the knowing how to live it that troubles me—if I only knew—

RUSSELL

(Putting his arm round the back of the seat.) We should find happiness in our own way. That is the right of each of us. Oh, darling, listen to me. *(Reaches his arms to her.)* You know how I love you!

LOTTIE

I cannot believe it—I must not believe it.

A MODERN PHENIX

RUSSELL

I'll make your life beautiful. I'll make the world beautiful for you. I will give you your dreams.

LOTTIE

But, if the happiness should not come—and the dreams not be realized?

RUSSELL

The happiness will come to us, darling—it is for us—do trust me—we will live for each other—we do not need the old creeds and the old laws to live by—we will weave a new fabric for our lives—and into it, dear, we will weave threads of gold and beauty.

LOTTIE

How I have longed for beauty—I must have beauty. I cannot be content with just dreaming of it any longer. I cannot be like so many of those women back home; dried up, withered and sour,—all because they didn't dare—they didn't even dare to dream. They thought it must be wrong, just because it was beautiful.

RUSSELL

Well, I dare, and you must. We'll give the lie

THIRD ACT

to all dull good people who do not understand youth and beauty and dreams.

LOTTIE

Russell, you do not know how hard it is to live in a little country village where the affairs of each other and the care of crops are the only subjects of conversations. Nature is beautiful up there—but they do not see it, and they resent your mentioning it.

RUSSELL

Of course you cannot return to such a life—you must not think of it.

LOTTIE

(*Thinking of the doctor.*) Do you ever wonder what some one else would do if he were facing your problem? When you have to decide about something do you ever try to imagine what some friend would do if he were in your place? Or, if you should ask the advice of some one do you ever try to think what it would be?

RUSSELL

No, in this world we must decide for ourselves in the end—so we may as well do it at first. Others do not know what is best for us—only we know that.

A MODERN PHENIX

LOTTIE

But do we know—some of us—when we have nothing to compare from—no way of judging—when we are lost in the woods and do not know which path to take?

RUSSELL

If you were lost in the woods, you would take the most beautiful path—the path lined with blossoming trees of gorgeous colors—the path of the golden sunlight—and you would be right, darling, for I would be waiting for you on that path.

LOTTIE

Your words are beautiful. Almost, they persuade me. I feel so sure of myself and you—when you are talking. It is only when I think of people I get frightened.

RUSSELL

Why think of people, dear? We have each other—and our love.

LOTTIE

I lack courage not to think of people. All of my life I've been ruled by other people's "must" and "must not."

THIRD ACT

RUSSELL

Then be ruled by my *must*—let me be your world.

LOTTIE

(*Swept away suddenly by this touch of mastery—where persuasion has failed. She speaks agitatedly, breathlessly.*) Be my world—my beauty-filled world—my beauty-filled world!

RUSSELL

(*Takes her in his arms passionately.*) Lottie, my little fragile flower. God, how lovely you are! I must, I will have you! I'll take you away with me to some beautiful spot, where no one will find us, and never let you go. Heavens, you are so delicate,—so lovely!

LOTTIE

(*In ecstasy.*) Take me!

[CURTAIN]



FOURTH ACT

A NEW ENGLAND "sitting room," unattractive and over-crowded with knickknacks. A clash of colors. The furniture is mostly of that period of extreme ugliness, the middle part of the last century.

Marble-topped table in center of room; a horse-hair sofa at the right with crocheted "tidies" on the back of it, and on the backs of chairs; at the left of table a heavy upholstered arm chair with faded and tattered covering; a few other chairs about. A cottage organ is set across one corner of the room. A what-not filled with china and seashell junk in another corner. Windows in the right wall. A door at the back and one at left.

Dr. Von Blatz and Mrs. Thompson are engaged in conversation.



FOURTH ACT

MRS. THOMPSON

I have said very little to her since she returned. I just can't—my heart is broken.

DR. VON BLATZ

But think of her heart. It has been wrenched and torn and battered by experience. We must help her now to live.

MRS. THOMPSON

(*Hysterically.*) Think of the disgrace—the awful disgrace. It is her father's bad blood. My folks have always been God-fearing people—who shunned evil. He was different—a wild rover who feared neither God, man, nor devil, and broke every law.

DR. VON BLATZ

“God-fearing,” “bad blood”—two phrases we conjure with, and work evil spells. We tell people to “fear God,” and immediately they run from what they fear. We stamp persons with “bad blood”—we anoint their souls with “bad blood,” we instill the mental suggestion of “bad blood” into their consciousness and subconsciousness.

A MODERN PHENIX

Blood never is bad in the beginning until thought turns it so.

MRS. THOMPSON

How did she find you? How did she ever tell you?

DR. VON BLATZ

I met her before she went away with Russell. Thank Heaven, she thought of me in her distress. One bitter cold night, about six weeks ago, the woman who conducted the lodging house where she was staying, brought me a letter that the poor child had dictated to her, telling me of her illness, and asking me to come to her.

MRS. THOMPSON

Where was the boy—this Russell, as you call him?

DR. VON BLATZ

She had left him—because of his attentions to other women. He was no longer kind to her.

MRS. THOMPSON

Do you suppose she cared for him?

DR. VON BLATZ

No, she told me frankly that she did not love him—but saw in him the realization of her dreams.

FOURTH ACT

He was the key with which to unlock all material chests, where soft luxury is kept.

MRS. THOMPSON

And she did not care for him? She had not even that excuse?

DR. VON BLATZ

She had the excuse of loving beauty—but not the ability to translate that love correctly.

MRS. THOMPSON

Did you attend to the burial of the child?

DR. VON BLATZ

Yes, the child was born dead—the physician was just leaving when I arrived.

MRS. THOMPSON

What a blessing it died.

DR. VON BLATZ

Yes, Lottie was not ready to be a mother. Premature mothers are more deserving of pity than undesired children.

MRS. THOMPSON

How many people know about it? I have said nothing here to the neighbors. They simply know

A MODERN PHENIX

that Lottie has been sick, but they don't know the particulars—of course the Leightons would not mention it—perhaps we can keep it a secret—almost—(*eagerly*).

DR. VON BLATZ

Of course you must not talk of it to people, and above everything not to Lottie—constant talking on the subject would delay her development.

MRS. THOMPSON

I must move from this town. I cannot stay here.

DR. VON BLATZ

Then move by all means, and take Lottie with you.

MRS. THOMPSON

Would it be best for her to go with me? She has acted so badly—so badly. She might do some wild thing again—I can't stand it—I have had to bear so much.

DR. VON BLATZ

Do you intend to live somewhere in smug self-righteousness, and send her away alone?

MRS. THOMPSON

You act as though I was the one to blame—as though it was my fault.

FOURTH ACT

DR. VON BLATZ

Not your fault, my poor woman. You brought a child into the world. A creature different from you and your people, I'll grant you. A fine white flame, fanned by every wind. An instrument attuned and responsive to all music. A being that thrilled to all beauty—only you could not teach her to distinguish between real beauty and the mirage. You were not equal to her potential intelligence.

MRS. THOMPSON

If we go away together to some other town do you think she would deny everything for my sake and her own?

DR. VON BLATZ

She will not need to deny it. No one will talk to her on the subject.

MRS. THOMPSON

If I could only believe that she will not do something else sometime.

DR. VON BLATZ

Mrs. Thompson, Nature has taught your daughter a lesson—has spoken to her in a voice harsh and vibrant with intensity. She does not always choose an interpreter—but she speaks to

A MODERN PHENIX

us directly—she holds us while we listen—and then we must—we must hear. Lottie has received the benefit from this lesson—nothing more of good can be hoped for by talking about it.

MRS. THOMPSON

There is Peter Graham. He has always thought pretty well of Lottie—he was delighted when he heard she had returned. Do you think she might tell him? (*A door slams.*) Ssh' Ssh'—here she is—

[*Enter Lottie and Peter. A sort of silence falls upon the room for a moment, something drear and hopeless cast by the mother. Lottie is apathetic and fragile, but one feels the spark of determination still glowing within her. Peter is rather white and his mouth grim. He holds his head up with that unnatural stiffness that proclaims the effort to do so.*]

LOTTIE

Dr. Von Blatz, I want you to meet my friend Peter Graham. (*The two men shake hands.*)

DR. VON BLATZ

Peter, I am happy to meet you. Lottie has often spoken to me of you.

FOURTH ACT

LOTTIE

(*With a resolute, half-defiant air.*) Mother, Dr. Von Blatz,—I have told Peter—everything.

DR. VON BLATZ

My poor child—

MRS. THOMPSON

Lottie! How could you?

LOTTIE

I had to. Peter is my oldest friend—my only friend in this place. He asked me about my life at the Leightons—about what happened since I left them—and I had to tell him the truth—I *wished* to tell him the truth.

MRS. THOMPSON

(*Weeping.*) There, doctor, what did I tell you? She cares nothing for me or herself.

PETER

If she had lied to me would it have shown that she cared for you and herself?

MRS. THOMPSON

You do not understand the disgrace of having the village people know the story.

A MODERN PHENIX

PETER

I cannot understand any disgrace where Lottie is concerned.

DR. VON BLATZ

(Realizing that here is a real person at last.)
Well said, my boy. Disgrace is a flying germ that fastens in the minds that will receive it, and breeds intolerance.

LOTTIE

Mother, I am so tired of your prating about disgrace, so very tired of it; after all it is what you consider *your* disgrace that you fear.

MRS. THOMPSON

You and the doctor think with your fine stories, made up before you came back here, that you can change my mind about sin.

PETER

Lottie cannot change your ideas, Mrs. Thompson, but at least she can stand firm on her own.

MRS. THOMPSON

You are a rightly brought up boy, Peter, but she has bewitched you, too. A man will always stand by a woman of her kind.

FOURTH ACT

PETER

Thank God for that. It's a worthy kind.

LOTTIE

(*To doctor.*) I have been telling Peter about your kind offer—and my chance.

MRS. THOMPSON

(*Becoming interested.*) An offer? What sort of an offer, if I may ask?

LOTTIE

Dr. Von Blatz has a hospital for defective children. He wishes me to assist him in one of the departments.

DR. VON BLATZ

Lottie would be a great help to my poor children now.

MRS. THOMPSON

Oh, I dare say! (*With contempt.*)

DR. VON BLATZ

Then you have decided to accept my offer?

LOTTIE

I feel that I should do something useful—it has all been such a waste—my poor silly life. I have

A MODERN PHENIX

been talking with Peter. He has done so much—so much for others.

PETER

I have only done what I had to do, the thing that stood before me. I think we all have to do that. After all, Lottie, you, too, have done that.

DR. VON BLATZ

The thing that stands before us looms big in our pathway—it overpowers us and we follow it—but, during the winding journey it takes, many lights are thrown upon it—from many angles we see it in its true proportions—and it no longer frightens us.

MRS. THOMPSON

Well, I suppose if you have decided to go and work in a hospital it is useless for me to say anything.

LOTTIE

Quite useless, mother, you are as incapable of guiding my future life as you have been of my past.

MRS. THOMPSON

(Going out and slamming door.) You always have done as you pleased, and I suppose you always will.

FOURTH ACT

DR. VON BLATZ

My dear child, can you be ready to leave with me tomorrow evening?

LOTTIE

Yes, doctor.

PETER

Oh, are you going to take Lottie away again, so soon?

DR. VON BLATZ

Yes, I think it best—if she will allow me to decide for her.

PETER

Yes, I suppose you are right—I know you are right—but I had hopes of Lottie staying here a while; thought we might fight it out together somehow—if she'd let me fight for her. (*With sudden passion.*) I'd kill anyone who dared say a word about her.

DR. VON BLATZ

I am sure that she has a real friend in you—but at present she needs to forget. And taking up this new work she will have the opportunity to release those splendid potentialities within her, and start again. Think of it, Peter, building souls, to put life and beauty into what is hardly more

A MODERN PHENIX

than clay, why it is creation—almost—Peter—soul-building.

PETER

Lottie told me about your great work. How you always give something for what you take away. It is easy to tell a person to forget a sorrow and then leave him—but to fill up his whole mind with something else—so he has no room for the sorrow to fit in—that is great.

LOTTIE

It is great, Peter, the greatest thing in the world.

DR. VON BLATZ

If all the energy and thought force in the world, that is wasted on useless regret, could be collected into one great holding of power it could accomplish what all the wars and absurdities never will be able to achieve.

PETER

My father used to say that if one did something wrong one should suffer—should wish to suffer. Somehow I never could think as he did.

DR. VON BLATZ

A deliberate suffering will never expiate a wrong—although there are those unhealthy—

FOURTH ACT

minded ones who get a sensual delight from such torture.

LOTTIE

If I had not thought of you at a certain dark moment of my life—I should have been another of those unfortunate ones—but my suffering would not have been deliberate. It would have been a shadow standing at my side that I could not escape from—although I know I should have tried.

DR. VON BLATZ

The deliverance always comes searching us in the dark hour—but by shutting ourselves close within our sorrow—we often fail to see it. (*Takes out his watch. Arises while speaking.*) Now, I will find your mother and explain our going away to her—if I can.

[*Dr. Von Blatz leaves stage.*]

PETER

May I come and see you some time at the hospital? You will never know how I missed you all the long time you were away.

LOTTIE

And I missed you too, Peter. Now I know that it was *you* I missed.

A MODERN PHENIX

PETER

(*Eagerly.*) Really, Lottie,—really?

LOTTIE

Yes, when I was trying to fill up my life with parties and dresses—I was all the time longing for something else—and now I know that it was an old friend—I wanted to see *you*, Peter.

PETER

You must never include me in your forgetting—I could not bear it. Will you let me help you if I can ever do anything? The doctor is a wonderful friend—but I want to do something for you, too—do let me.

LOTTIE

You have done something, Peter. When I left the house this evening I felt that I could stand things no longer. I wanted to run away out of the sound of my mother's voice—it seemed as if even the doctor could no longer sustain my strength. I ran like a hunted thing—then I met you in the dark down there in the lane—you put out your arms—and spoke my name—(*excitedly*)—Oh, Peter, you have done something.

FOURTH ACT

PETER

I have done nothing—but I want to. Dear, this village is not the whole world—not a tiny part of it. My work seemed to be here, so I have stayed—but now I wish to go—to go away with you.

LOTTIE

Not yet, Peter. I must give myself—all of myself—to my work for a time. Anything less than that would not be fair to the doctor—neither would it be fair to you, nor to those I am to serve. Later when I have accomplished something—when I have builded well the structure of my soul, perhaps then, Peter, perhaps—if you still wish it—

PETER

(Taking her in his arms.) If I still wish it—

[Enter Dr. Von Blatz—they turn and look at him—he regards them for a moment—then—

DR. VON BLATZ

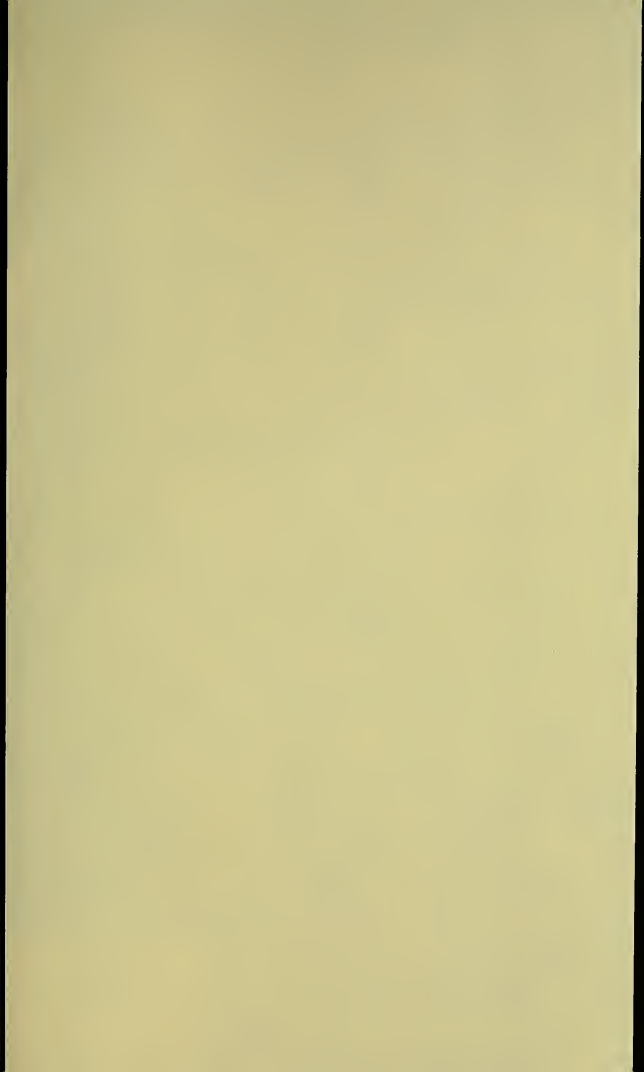
From the ashes of despair—the phenix soars to life.

[CURTAIN]



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